SPY LEFT OUT IN THE COLD AFTER 25 YEARS STARTS JOB HUNTING

By Steven V. Roberts
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Frank Dawson is looking for a job, so he wrote out a resume of his career experience. "I showed it to my children over the Thanksgiving holidays," he said with a laugh. "It was a revelation to all of them."

Dawson has spent more than 25 years in the CIA specializing in counterintelligence, or "catching hostile spies," as he put it. He is looking for a job because he is one of 212 senior officers who have been fired by Adm. Stansfield Turner, the CIA director, in a massive purge of the agency's covert operations division.

Frank Dawson is a pseudonym. The officer would not allow his real name or any personal details to be used. He said he was afraid to be seen publicly with a reporter and would talk only on the telephone. Because he is not leaving until spring, he is still an active officer, and he could not believe he was breaking the code of silence that he had lived with for so long.

"THIS ORGANIZATION, that I put 25 plus years of my life into, is being ruined," said Dawson. "The press gave us such a helluva beating while only reporting minor facets of things, and here I am talking to the press. Six months or a year ago, if you had called, I wouldn't have given you the time of day. But I am trying to wake up the Congress of the United States in order to stop this man. It's as if your family was being attacked and you've got to defend it."

Dawson fought in World War II, went back to college after his discharge, and joined the CIA in the early 1950s. "The Korean War was on, and I felt there was a need for the intelligence business," he recalled.

"It's hard to describe," he continued. "But it was the Cold War, the McCarthy period. The subversion that was going on in this country — we just needed people to fight this, and we had a sense of satisfaction in our accomplishments. In this day of liberalism it seems trite to make a statement like that, but it was true. Today, people have forgotten that period."

WHEN HIS CHILDREN were young, Dawson referred to the agency as the "pickle factory" around the house. Later, his daughter confessed that she had been ashamed of him for years. She really thought he had worked in a pickle factory.

This helps explain why the officers feel so strongly about what is happening. Once they felt indispensable; now they are told that they are disposable. Even worse, the cuts are being made by an outsider — they insist on referring to Turner as "the admiral" — and in public. In short, they feel humiliated.

Some are retiring on their pensions. But men like Dawson have children in college and cannot afford the luxury of leisure. But there is not exactly a booming market in old spies.

Dawson "sterilized" his resume, and had it approved by the agency, but he is not happy with it. "It's frustrating to write a resume in which you can't give them enough to really get a bite on," he said.

Mrs. Dawson called to her husband that dinner was ready. "I'm still amazed," he told the reporter, "that I'm talking to you at the other end of this phone." Then he hung up.